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Cover and interior design:



Foreword

The ACS Unit Services Strategy may appear new and different, but it only seems that way. Like popular fashion, hairstyles, food, music, and art, it too had a previous life. It used to be called command consultation, a kind of homage shown unit chains of command which simultaneously recognized their proprietorship over soldiers and families as well as their need for supportive expertise in dealing with soldier and family problems.

I encourage you to heartily embrace this strategy. Partnering with the units in your military community establishes the kinds of collaborative working relationships that enable ACS to more effectively aid and educate unit leaders, provide unit-based services, and enhance the referral process. Done imaginatively, this kind of collaboration could conceiveably become your preeminent marketing campaign.

I know time, money, and manpower are concerns in the field; however, bold-faced ingenuity has the power to make them all seem less important. If we can all agree that working collaboratively with units is important in the work that we do, I think we give ourselves permission to think creatively about how to make it happen. Here's hoping you can see your way clear.

JAMES N. JACKSON LTC, GS Chief, Army Community Service "I have noticed a significant improvement in services offered by ACS since they switched to having Unit Services Coordinators. I like having a single, knowledgeable source who is familiar with my unit who can handle problems from cradle to grave."

Company Commander



Part I



The ACS Unit Services Strategy (USS)

Unit Services

Strategy Supports

the ACS Mission!

Why is ACS embracing the Unit Services Strategy?

A CS's long-standing mission has been to "promote self-reliance, resiliency and stability" of soldiers and their families and in so doing has aided in "maintaining the readiness of the military community". ACS has strived to achieve this mission by developing and delivering (or in some cases

coordinating) the services needed to educate and develop skills of soldiers and families so that they can become self-

reliant. However, it remains an ongoing challenge for ACS to reach soldiers and their families, especially prior to problems occurring. Outreach efforts of ACS have therefore become important.

Secondly, ACS is under the authority of the garrison

commander, an influential person in the nature and direction of ACS services and operations at a particular installation. Further, ACS operates in an environment in which leadership have responsibility for and is most concerned about readiness (during war and peace). ACS's mission is

to "assist commanders in maintaining the readiness of individuals, families, and communities". As

a result, leadership, in particular unit leadership, are customers or clients of ACS's services. To meet the specific needs of leadership requires ACS to provide consultation and other services appropriate to this organizational level within the military community.

What is the Unit Services Strategy (USS)?

A CS's commitment to serving leadership better culminated in the formal establishment of the Unit Services Strategy initiative in 1993, although installations have been working with leadership informally for many years. Under the USS, ACS is designating members of the ACS staff to specific units in an effort to establish an active partnership with commanders to provide the support units need. Within this partnership, ACS is providing an array of "unit services".

KEY PRINCIPLES OF UNIT SERVICES STRATEGY

Supporting Units is Critical to Meeting the Needs of Military Community

This service delivery approach is based on the premise that an effective way to support soldiers and families is through their units as they are most closely linked to this "community". By having staff represent ACS and have responsibility for working with particular units, ACS is demonstrating to units a willingness and commitment to serving as a partner in promoting soldier and family well-being. In working closely with the units, ACS can help leaders anticipate and meet the needs of their troops.

Leadership are Customers of ACS

The USS is an active approach to understanding customer needs and to addressing those needs in the most effective, efficient way. This strategy expands the idea of who is considered an ACS customer and focuses on units and leaders as critical customers.

USS is a Way to be Proactive

By establishing a relationship in which ACS and a unit monitor unit needs on an ongoing basis and provide easier and quicker access to programs and services, soldiers' and families' crises can be prevented or reduced. This effort can reduce the overall amount of command time spent handling personal and family problems.

Goals of the USS

- To connect each military unit with ACS services
- To provide a visible ACS staff member (the Unit Services Coordinator) for unit chain of command on ACS programs and services
- To more effectively help soldiers and families
- To improve unit skills on how to support soldiers and families

What is the role of the Unit Services Coordinator (USC)?

B y being assigned to a unit, you are being asked to represent ACS when in contact with the unit(s). Regardless of whether you choose to use the title of USC, your responsibilities are:

USC'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Establishing **collaborative working relationships** with the chain of command within your unit(s)
- Maintaining communication with your unit(s)
- Providing (or coordinating) **unit-based services** to support soldiers and families
- Aiding unit leaders in supporting soldiers and families.

Establishing collaborative working relationships with unit **chain of command.** In order to help unit leaders effectively, it is essential to establish a relationship in which command can communicate the unit's needs as well as important information about the unit (e.g., mission, deployment schedule, unit stresses). Further, the desire is to form a close working relationship (i.e., partnership) rather than a relationship in which the commander dumps problems in your lap or only calls you in to fix a crisis. Because in many units soldier and family problems are often handled at the lower levels of the chain of command (i.e., platoon leader, company commander, first sergeant), you may see that forming relationships with these leaders is important.

Maintaining communication with your unit(s). Establishing and maintaining communication with your unit is vital to developing and maintaining a positive working relationship with the unit(s) you serve. Further, what the communications are about is essential to your gaining an understanding of the unit and needs as well as enhancing the knowledge and skills of the unit leaders with whom you work.

Providing unit-based services to support soldiers and families. By forming a relationship with the unit leaders and gaining acceptance, you (and ACS) are likely to have greater access to soldiers and families and thus can offer services at the unit. Based on your communications with the unit, however, there is likely to be a need to either tailor or develop programs to meet the needs of soldiers and families in the units you serve.

Aiding unit leaders in supporting soldiers and families. As a USC vou are a commander's resource. Therefore the knowledge that you have about ACS, other community resources, and soldier and family issues and the skills you have in responding to soldier and family issues will be useful in enhancing commands' abilities to respond and in reducing the amount of command time spent handling soldier and family matters. In your contact with unit leadership you need to be prepared to assist unit leaders in the following ways: 1) assessing soldiers' and families' needs, 2) providing information on ACS and other programs, 3) coordinating training and education that the unit needs from ACS, and 4) in some cases, participating in command staff meetings and other forums to



USC is a Consultant not a Caseworker

It is important to remember that the Unit Services Strategy is oriented toward consultation with units rather than casework within units. ACS is striving to enhance unit leadership's skills in supporting the unit. While some individual soldiers' needs may be addressed through referrals to ACS and may eventually become cases of ACS, the USC is not assigned to a unit for the purpose of serving as an on-site social worker.

What's in it for me? for ACS?

examine soldier and family issues, plan programs and trainings, and make decisions on soldier and

family matters.

B ased on the strength of the relationship and communication you are able to establish with your unit, you are likely to become the most visible member of ACS to the unit(s) you serve. Further, if unit leaders view the services and support you provide to them (and to the soldiers and families) to be of high quality and value, this is also likely to make units seek your and ACS's services more. This connection to the units is also beneficial from the perspective of your ACS because ACS can then garner support from the unit for ACS functions, especially unfunded missions such as holiday programs. Additionally, the overall image of ACS on the installation is likely to be enhanced through positive word of mouth from unit leaders.

Does the ACS Unit Services Strategy work?

A three-year evaluation of the Unit Services Strategy sponsored by the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center was conducted at select Army installations to find out if this method of delivering ACS services makes a difference. The results indicate that this strategy has proven benefits for unit leaders, soldiers and families, and USC and ACS.

BENEFITS FOR UNIT LEADERS

- Greater accessibility to ACS (with one central point of contact)
- Increase in time savings of leadership on personnel and family problems
- More effective leadership
- Better awareness of family support programs
- More positive perceptions of ACS

BENEFITS FOR SOLDIERS AND FAMILIES

- Increased awareness of and access to family support programs
- Earlier identification of soldier needs

BENEFITS FOR THE USC AND ACS

- Increased knowledge of all ACS programs (by staff, unit leaders and soldiers and family members)
- Increased use of ACS
- Ability of staff to back each other up
- → Increased access to units
- Better knowledge of unit needs and demands
- Open communication with units
- Closer tie to Army mission
- Improved standing in Army community
- the Units' support for ACS
- More responsive to soldier and family needs.

Seeing these results has been encouraging and very gratifying to installations implementing this strategy. In the words of one ACS Director, **"we will continue since proven effective."**

Does ACS have to apply the "Unit Services Strategy" to reap these benefits? What is so different from what we are already doing?

hile ACS has already been working with units over the years and many of you may feel that the units know you, especially if you are at a small installation or work in a program area that requires command involvement such as family advocacy or financial assistance, this contact with units generally occurs when there is a "crisis" case in the unit or special circumstance such as a deployment. As a result, contact with units at the installation may be sporadic and uneven and ACS has this negative image particularly among soldiers and some leaders as "place to go when you have

problems". Further, ACS often has problems getting soldiers and families to use ACS services or attend classes in part due to a lack of command support. By not being able to reach as many soldiers and families as desired, concerns about the level of incidences of abuse. soldier indebtedness, and other problems remain. The attempt here is to change some of the problems ACS and the installation have been facing. The intent is to build on what ACS has already been doing and to place greater attention on ties to the units. In this manner. ACS is fulfilling its mission and motto as PARTNERS IN READINESS

About the Unit Services Strategy Guide

By being a partner in readiness, ACS is committed to supporting the needs and challenges that face unit commanders and supervisors. The Unit Services Strategy refers to leadership consultation and the array of services delivered proactively by ACS staff assigned to designated units. To assist ACS in supporting units, this guide offers:

- Guidelines on implementing unit services
- Effective practices on working with units
- Tips on overcoming common challenges.

The USS Guide is useful for ACS Directors, Unit Services Coordinators, and ACS staff in general. It provides a roadmap for successfully implementing the strategy and provides important lessons learned for enhancing your ACS's efforts.

Part II



How to Implement the Unit Services Strategy at Your ACS

T he purpose of this section of the guide is to layout the USS implementation steps. While this guide maps out a sequential process for instituting this strategy, the activities described may be modified to suit the environment of your ACS.

The process for implementing the strategy involves the following six steps:

Step 1: Developing a Vision and Implementation Plan

Step 2: Providing USS Orientation and Cross-Training to ACS Staff

Step 3: Assigning Staff as USCs

Step 4: Briefing Leadership and Units

Step 5: Assessing Units' Needs

Step 6: Providing Ongoing Services and Support to Units

A separate discussion of each step follows. An installation is considered to have fully implemented the strategy once having attained step 6. To sustain efforts, it will be necessary to devote additional attention to areas such as staff training, leadership briefings and unit needs assessments. While further information on follow-up efforts is provided in Parts III and IV of this guide, this section describes the initial efforts for instituting the strategy.

Implementation Steps

Step 1:

Developing a Vision and Implementation Plan While the Unit Services Strategy is designed first to "increase unit leader awareness and contact with ACS" and secondly to "provide soldiers and family members greater access to programs designed to ...enhance readiness and increase self-reliance", your ACS needs to devise a vision of the strategies and mechanisms for

achieving these objectives at your installation. It is advised that all ACS staff be involved in developing the vision of how to apply this approach within the daily operations of your ACS. This section provides some key questions to discuss in developing your vision.

Developing a Vision

D eveloping a vision is the first and most important step to implementing the strategy. There are several key questions that your ACS should consider in this vision development process:

How can your ACS increase its contact with units? (It is proposed that ACS assign staff members to units and acknowledge this activity by referring to these ACS staff as Unit Services Coordinators or USCs. More detailed information about the assignment process is provided in Step 3, Assigning Staff as USCs.)

- What are the ways in which USCs (or ACS staff) might contact units in order to establish a working relationship with units and enhance support of soldiers and families?
- How often might USCs be in contact with the units they are assigned?
- At what level of chain of command within units should USCs have contact?
- How can USCs support units, especially unit leaders? What will the USC provide?
 What won't the USC provide?
- What expectations should unit leaders have of USCs?

What procedures, if any, may need to change by establishing ACS staff as liaisons to units? (For example, how will unit referrals and requests for classes be handled?)

What support, if any, is needed from within and outside of ACS to institute this strategy?

- How can the ACS Director support staff and how can ACS staff support each other?
- What level of support is needed from installation and unit leadership to support ACS's efforts?

What are the indicators of having achieved the results desired? (For

example, how will you know when you have a successful working relationship with unit leaders? What evidence will demonstrate that unit leaders have increased their knowledge of ACS programs?) [Note: This is not an exhaustive list of questions to be considered. Reviewing the Self-Assessment Guide for ACS Unit Services Strategy, which is described in Part III of this guide, may be helpful in steering a comprehensive discussion on what areas indicators need to be identified.] How can data on these indicators be collected in order to monitor ACS's efforts?

What activities are pivotal to achieving the desired results?

How should the implementation steps be carried out at your installation?

Utilizing these questions may be helpful in developing your ACS's vision of the USS at your installation taking into consideration the USS goals and results you expect to see. Having this "vision" will provide a direction for your efforts and be helpful in establishing expectations.

Implementation Plan

In addition to creating a vision, it is essential to develop a timeline for implementing the strategy. This timeline should cover two areas:

- 1. the schedule for carrying out the six implementation steps and
- 2. the timeframe for "rolling out" the Unit Services Strategy at your installation (i.e., the number of units served).

With regard to "rolling out" the strategy, research has supported the approach of "rolling out" slowly, especially at large installations. In this manner, the ACS would initially begin by targeting a select number of units and gradually add other units until eventually ACS serves all units (which could include other Services and Reserves, if present at the installation).

Step 2:

Providing USS
Orientation and
Cross-training to
ACS Staff

In order for ACS staff to carry out the role as Unit Services Coordinator, it is important for ACS staff to have an understanding of this service delivery strategy as well as to ensure that ACS staff have the information they are likely to need. Thus cross-training would include at least information on:

- USS strategy and USC role
- All ACS programs and services (hence the name "cross-training")
- On- and off-post resources
- Military unit orientation.

While these topics are recommended for initial training, other topics may be considered important to address and should be included. These topics might include team building, communicating with leadership, and serving as a consultant. At some installations, the information disseminated and discussed at training has been put in notebooks so that USCs have a "Smartbook".

CROSS-TRAINING TOPICS: WHAT EVERY USC NEEDS TO KNOW

USS and USC Role

If ACS staff are involved in developing the ACS vision of the Unit Services Strategy (Step 1), then there may need to be only a brief review of the USS and USC role. If not, then a discussion of the strategy and role is necessary so that staff have an understanding of what is expected and what they are being asked to do in serving as a liaison to the units.

ACS Programs

In order for USCs to be able to represent ACS and serve as a point of contact for ACS to unit leaders, then ACS staff will need to have a basic knowledge of all ACS programs and services. One approach that installations have used in planning this section of the training is to have the program managers determine what information on each specific program is essential for ACS staff to know. Information that might be considered important would be: questions frequently asked about the program, core activities of the program, and common procedures and protocols handled by program staff. In sum, the training template for each ACS program might include:

- Overview of program objectives
- Description of services offered at your post
- Review of important forms or procedures
- Notification of resource materials available.

On- and Off-Post Resources

To be able to provide appropriate referrals to unit leaders, ACS staff need to be familiar with other support resources on the installation and within the surrounding community. In all likelihood, the ACS already has a community resource directory, installation book, and other resource materials with information on other agencies. These directories often contain the following information:

- Types of services offered
- Target populations served
- Eligibility requirements

- Hours and location of service
- Points of contact, including phone numbers
- Fees, if any.

If a directory exists, then it may only be necessary to notify everyone where the directory is maintained. However, it may be useful to potentially highlight key agencies providing valuable services to soldiers and families that staff may have little familiarity. For example, on-post installation organizations that might be highlighted are: Housing referral, Social Work Services, Child and Youth Services, Chaplains and family life services, and legal assistance. Off-post resources that might be highlighted would include: United Way, Family Services, college and university education and training programs, and low income programs such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Head Start.

On- and Off-Post Resources

The primary customer of the USS is military leadership. Consequently the Unit Services Coordinator must understand the military and its units. Knowledge of the military, especially the Army, will increase your understanding of unit concerns and ability to converse with unit leaders. Both will serve to enhance your credibility with unit leaders.

While learning about the military is an ongoing process, it is recommended that the initial training cover these facets of the military:

- Army customs and courtesies
- Unit-based family programs (including sponsorship programs, unit welcoming and newcomers orientation, and Family Support Groups)
- Organizational structure of the installation
- Missions of the installation and of its organizations
- Unit structure (squad, company, battalion, brigade, division)
- Army personnel grades and accompanying insignias
- Responsibilities of unit leaders.

In many cases, it may not be necessary to address all of these topics, particularly for those staff who are spouses of active duty members, are prior active duty, or have been working with the military for many years. Determine with your staff what information would be helpful to review.

Frequently Asked Questions About Cross-Training

hy are we cross-training?

So that the USC can provide appropriate referrals to unit leaders, can adequately address unit leaders' questions about particular ACS services, can suggest the appropriate ACS services to meet the unit's needs or connect the unit leader with the appropriate staff member in ACS to get the specific services needed, especially services that may need to be modified to meet unit needs. Based on interviews with USCs at select installations, all unanimously agreed that cross-training was vital to them feeling prepared for the USC role and ACS's success with USS.

No, but with a greater understanding of each program area and each staff member's roles and services, then you are better able to make more appropriate referrals to ACS and to be aware of issues (especially warning signs of soldiers or family members in trouble) that might exist in the units. Thus while you may not be the subject matter expert (SME) for a program, you will be viewed as a SME of ACS to the unit. Therefore, you will want to consult with appropriate staff when questions arise for which you might obtain the answer. However, when you feel technical assistance is needed, you may want to connect the unit to the appropriate program staff member.

Installations that have conducted cross-training report that the training has also assisted with ACS operations because staff have been able to back each other up when a staff member is away from the office. In addition, these ACSs feel they have been able to be more responsive to soldiers and families who call or walk in to the ACS. Staff members can now provide these clients with the information/forms they seek or can provide information that will enable the client to be better prepared when they have an appointment with a specific staff member.

ow long should cross-training take?

This really depends on your ACS organization. Training can be quite intense and compacted into a one-month time period or it could be stretched across several months. The time frame for training is dependent upon your implementation plan and the demands on ACS staff.

ho should receive cross-training?

The way in which training has been conducted across installations varies and hence is a decision for your ACS to make. At some installations virtually all ACS staff are being cross-trained, even if they are not expected to serve as USCs. Their rationale is that all ACS personnel should know the many facets of the organization. At other installations only staff who are being assigned as USCs are cross-trained.

ho will do the training?

Much of the training can be done by ACS staff themselves, and supplemented by key individuals from other installation organizations and the community as appropriate.

Step 3:Assigning
Staff as USCs

Your ACS will need to select the individuals who will serve as USCs and then determine what units are to be assigned to each USC. The number of units assigned a USC will depend upon your implementation plan.

Selection of USCs

In theory, any ACS staff member can serve as a USC. In examining the selection process at approximately 10% of Army installations, the selection process varied. While some installations selected certain ACS staff members, other installations included volunteers and contract staff. At some installations, the ACS Director was also selected as a USC. Based on an evaluation of the USS, the success of a USC does not appear to be tied to their position or grade, but appears to be associated with the individual's commitment to the role.

Assignment of USCs to Units

The process of assigning staff members (or USCs) to particular units also varies. Factors that ACSs report that they have taken into consideration include:

- Size of the unit
- Staff workload and availability
- Personality of staff member
- Staff member's familiarity and prior contact with unit
- Mission of the unit
- Deployment schedule of unit
- Type and frequency of problems that unit has previously had.

A combination of these factors is often considered in determining which and the number of units assigned to a particular USC. For example, several small units might be assigned to one USC whereas another will be assigned to one or two large units. Another example would be assigning those units with high abuse rates to program staff in the family advocacy area. While oftentimes the ACS Director has made the assignments, at some installations the ACS staff have had involvement in the assignment process.

Further, there are differences in the number of USCs assigned to units. Installations have made assignments using one of the following methods:

- One USC is assigned to the unit
- Two individuals are assigned to the unit, however one serves as the primary USC and the other as secondary (or backup) USC
- Two individuals serving as a USC team are assigned to the unit.

While there is no research evidence to suggest one method is better than another, those installations assigning primary and secondary USCs expressed that this can be confusing to units and requires close coordination amongst ACS staff. The team approach is reportedly successful, especially in the beginning when staff are gaining familiarity with the USC role and facing challenges dealing with the units.

Step 4:Briefing
Leadership
and Units

In order to gain units' support and receptivity to this effort by ACS, leadership support is essential. Further, unit leaders are likely to be more receptive "if they have heard about it from their boss." Thus, it is necessary to inform both installation and unit level leadership. Both the ACS Director and the Unit

Services Coordinators have an important part in the process of informing leadership about the initiative, both initially and on an ongoing basis.

ACS Director's Briefing Responsibilities

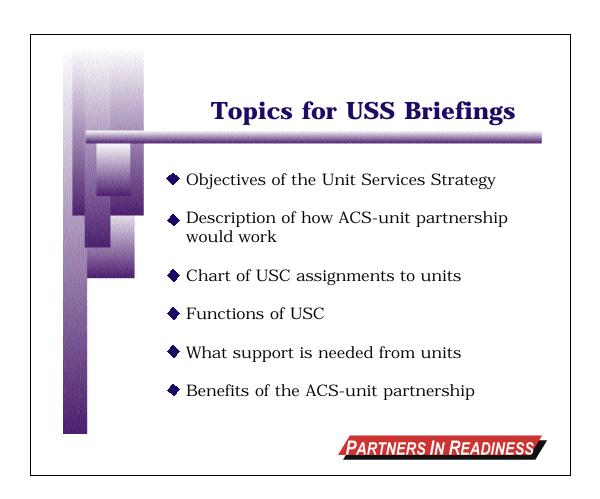
Because of the ACS Director's position, he/she has easier access to the installation leadership and thus has primary responsibility for briefing installation leadership and garnering their support. (A briefing packet on the Unit Services Strategy for leadership has been prepared and is available from U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center.) Because leadership support, including that of the DCA, is important for initiating and sustaining the USS, it is important to communicate ACS's efforts on an ongoing basis. (More detailed information on follow-up briefings and communications is presented in Part III of this guide.) It may be advisable to keep installation leadership, in particular DCAs, informed given that they can assign special projects and taskers to ACS which place other demands on ACS as well as make decisions on ACS operations and resources.

It is also important to brief each unit who is assigned a USC. Some installations have elected to have the ACS Director present the briefing accompanied by the USC to show ACS's commitment to the effort and to provide greater credibility with the units. Surveys conducted with unit leadership indicate that those who have been made aware of the strategy support the concept.

USC's Briefing Responsibilities

Each Unit Services Coordinator is responsible for attending the initial briefing to their unit leaders as well as keeping their unit leaders informed of the services provided and results achieved. It is particularly important to brief battalion leaders, especially if the USC's direct interaction is with unit chain of command at the company level or lower.

While your ACS will want to create a briefing individualized to your installation, here are some topics that should be addressed in the initial briefing to leadership on the Unit Services Strategy:



Step 5:Assessing
Units' Needs

After briefing unit leadership, it would be advisable to conduct a needs assessment to identify the needs of the units USCs are serving. It is an important first step to beginning the USC's dialogue with the unit on the unit's concerns. The purpose of the needs assessment is to determine the following:

what soldier and family issues are of concern to leaders; how are these issues being handled; what support is needed to address these issues; and what experiences have unit leaders, soldiers and family members had using ACS and other services. A list of approaches to conducting needs assessments is provided below, along with a sample leadership interview on the next page.

Once you have ascertained the information, it is important to summarize the information and then discuss the findings with unit leaders. You may wish to share other relevant data on soldier and family problems (e.g., incidence data on abuse, dishonored checks) available on post from other agencies, such as military police and Chaplains, or committees, such as a prevention working group, where available and appropriate. In this manner, you can then discuss with command how you (ACS) can support the unit.

Needs assessments can be conducted utilizing a variety of approaches including:

- Written survey completed by unit leaders, soldiers, and family members
- Semi-structured interviews with leadership
- Informal conversations with leadership, soldiers, and family members

- Focus groups with soldiers and family members
- Discussions with the unit's Family Support Group
- Observations during unit activities



SAMPLE UNIT LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW

- How well do you think the soldiers and families in your unit are coping with the unit demands and military lifestyle?
- What issues cause the most stress for soldiers and families in your unit?
- What problems surface most often among soldiers and families in your unit? In which soldier and family problems does the chain of command in your unit become involved?
- What types of support from the Army do soldiers and families need the most? How has the chain of command in your unit tried to address soldier and family problems? (e.g., referrals, trainings, support groups, etc.)
- How much contact have you had with ACS and other agencies? What ACS and other agencies' programs and services have you used?
- How well did these agencies' services meet your (or your soldiers and families) needs? What concerns, if any, do you have about the services and contact you have had with these agencies?
- In what ways do you feel ACS (and other agencies) might be able to assist your unit in addressing soldier and family concerns?
- What issue(s) or problem is of the greatest concern and you feel is a priority to address in the next three months? What issues are a priority for the next year?

Step 6:
Providing Ongoing
Services and
Support to Units

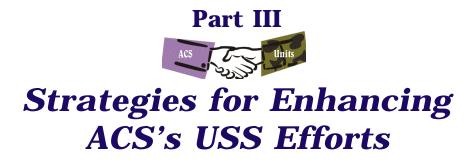
Following a discussion with command on both the unit problems or concerns and strategies to meet the unit needs, it will become clear how the USC (and ACS) can provide or coordinate the services and support needed. Thus, the USC may assist units in any of the following

ways including:

- Arranging ACS programs and services to be offered at the unit
- Providing information on and making referrals to ACS programs and on- and off-post agencies
- Disseminating information believed to be of importance or of interest to the unit

- Completing a special project (e.g., preparing a Family Care Plan booklet) agreed upon by USC and command
- Answering telephone calls about specific soldier and family issues
- Following up after programs or referrals to ensure issues are properly addressed
- Providing other types of support as appropriate.

The length of time the USC will need to invest to respond to a unit request or to complete a project will vary. The success of ACS with USS and success of USC emerges from communicating and working with units on an ongoing basis. This is important because the customer philosophy of this strategy is to be active rather than passive with units. Ideas on how to maintain a positive working relationship with units are provided in Part IV of this guide.



During an evaluation of the Unit Services Strategy, ACS Directors and staff were asked to indicate the factors critical to their success and to identify issues that had to be overcome. Based on conversations with seventeen Army installations, a number of important issues emerged as critical to ACS, as an organization being successful in instituting and sustaining services and support to the units. (Strategies to enhancing staff or USCs' efforts are discussed in Part IV of this guide.) The organizational issues identified are:



Each of these issues is discussed in separate sections that follow.

ACS Director's Leadership and Support

T he ACS Director as head of the agency has an important role in getting this initiative off the ground at the installation, garnering support needed within and outside ACS, and assisting and supporting staff in their efforts. Ways in which the ACS Director can support efforts include:

- Briefing installation (including the DPCA/DCA and Installation Commanders) and unit leadership about the USS, initially and on an ongoing basis to garner support and to maintain visibility of USS with leadership
- Introducing USC at the initial briefing on USS at the unit
- Conveying to staff an understanding how the USS benefits the ACS
- Marshaling available and appropriate resources



Determining and arranging the professional development and support USCs need [Some of the ways in which Directors reported they have offered their support is by: having USCs conduct their own meetings (which can be held without ACS Director being present), allowing time for USCs to be in contact/visit their units, writing articles for USC newsletter, publicizing USC activities in post newspaper, and providing additional training as needed.]



Making the USS an integral part of ACS.

Research findings suggest that ACS Director's leadership and support is critical to obtaining ACS staff's commitment to the role and level of USCs' efforts.

Professional Development of the Unit Services Coordinator

While cross-training can initially prepare ACS staff for the USC role, it is important to bear in mind that over time the ways in which ACS staff (USCs) support units is likely to change. Thus, it may become necessary for staff to enhance their knowledge and skills. At minimum, maintaining current knowledge of ACS programs and procedures is vitally important for USCs. Activities to enhance staff's professional development can be structured via formal training and staff meetings or conducted on an independent basis through networking and reviewing professional/research literature and materials.

- Updates on ACS programs are important because units will expect the information staff imparts to them be current, and because the USC needs to be assured that referrals he/she makes within ACS are appropriate to what programs are available. ACS program updates should be discussed as a staff every 6 months or when major program changes occur.
- Interacting with USCs from other Army installations is important for sharing lessons learned and for becoming aware of effective USS practices. The Internet provides an easy and cost-effective way to contact staff at other ACSs and thus the bulletin board on ACSLink may be helpful in this regard.
- There are numerous professional resources available through the World Wide Web from which staff can obtain important information on soldier and family issues. A representative listing of these sites is provided for illustrative purposes.

Domestic Violence

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (http://www.calib.com/nccanch)

NCCAN Clearinghouse Web site maintains current information on child abuse and neglect statistics, child welfare, prevention, state statutes, maltreatment issues, and national conferences. While information on a variety of printed publications is available, the site also offers several on-line databases and directories containing child abuse and neglect documents, prevention programs and treatment directory. In addition, the site provides links to other sites.

<u>Family Violence Prevention Fund</u> (http://www.fvpf.org/fund/)

The Family Violence Prevention Fund is a national non-profit organization that focuses on domestic violence education, prevention, and public policy reform. This web site includes facts about domestic violence; articles; personal stories; media, healthcare, workplace, and global responses to domestic violence; and campaign information.

<u>Institute for Family Advocacy and Leadership Development</u> (http://www.family-advocacy.com/index.htm)

This web site provides information and resources to support family advocacy for those families with a developmentally disabled member.

Consumer/Financial Counseling

Consolidated Credit Counseling Services, Inc. (http://www.debtfree.org)

This is a commercial site; however, it does offer a debt calculator and quiz as well as budgeting advice and a spending plan. Information on bankruptcy, loans, credit restoration, and other financial tips are also included.

<u>Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences: Consumer Issues WWW Resources</u> (http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/cashome/agdir/consumer.html)

This site contains various consumer resources addressing topics such as financial planning, money management, and taxes as well as provides links to other organizations.

Children/Youth Issues

<u>American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) Facts for Families</u> (http://www.aacp.org/web/aacap/factsFam/)

This site provides information about child and adolescent development and the issues that face youth.

Rio Hondo College-Useful Links

http://www.rh.cc.us/socscihum/csigala/html/links.html)

This site provides useful links to sites with information on child and adolescent development. Links are divided into prenatal, infants and toddlers, preschool, schoolage children, and teens.

National Network for Child Care: CyferNet (http://www.nncc.org/)

This site offers information on how to provide children and youth with safe, caring environments when they are away from their parents. Information topics include child development, special needs children, guidance and discipline, nutrition, and child abuse.

Family Resiliency

<u>Iowa State University Extension to Families</u>

(http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/Pages/communications/Resiliency/homepage.html)

This site provides information on how to build family strengths and develop sustainable community programs that promote resiliency. Also provides facts about family resiliency and links to other sites.

National Network for Family Resiliency: CyferNet (http://www.agnr.umd.edu/users/nnfr)

This site provides information and resources in the areas of adolescent sexuality, family economics, family policy, general family resiliency, intergenerational connections, parenting education, and violence prevention.

Children, Youth and Family Information

CyferNet Home Page (http://www.cyfernet.mes.umn.edu:2400)

Information within CyferNet includes:

- PAVNET, antiviolence information from federal agencies
- KIDS COUNT and other statistical and demographic information
- 4-H juried curricula abstracts
- Congressional Family Impact Seminars
- Curricula and activities for children, youth and family organizations
- Successful program and best practice descriptions
- Practical information on child and youth development, parenting and families
- Research reports
- Funding opportunities and strategies
- Bibliographies and resource lists
- Evaluation information
- Linkages to other children, youth, and family internet resources
- Bulletin Boards and electronic discussion groups
- Professional development opportunities

USS Orientation and Education of New Staff to ACS

Staff turnover in ACS is to be expected and normal. Hence, the ACS needs to develop a procedure in which new staff can be fully apprised of USS and easily transitioned into the USC role, if appropriate. Conducting a comprehensive cross-training as provided initially to the entire ACS staff though advantageous may not be plausible for one or two individuals. Installations have therefore reported opting for other

approaches such as: pairing new staff with established staff who are seen to be most effective USCs to mentor new staff, having new staff spend time with ACS program managers in order to become familiar with ACS programs and operations, and providing new staff with a copy of the USCs' Smartbook and other useful resource materials for self-directed learning.

Resource Materials for USCs

T here are several resources that staff have found helpful to have as USCs which they have placed in their **Smartbook**. In effect this book serves as a primary reference for the USC, and thus it includes materials necessary for communicating with unit leaders such as:

Cross-training material
Community resource directory
Briefing materials on ACS and on the USS
ACS program flyers and schedule
Commander's guide
USC forms
Unit information.



Cross-training material (ACS Program Information) By including cross-training materials, the USC has information about all of the ACS programs.

Community Resource

Directory An existing directory such as SITES book may be included so that USCs can provide appropriate information to unit leaders when referring to other on-and off-post agencies.

Briefings on ACS and USS

Standard briefings on ACS and, in particular, on the USS that are used for the initial briefings are often provided to USCs so that the USC can brief unit leaders as necessary. Having a briefing already prepared makes handling command turnover easier. As noted earlier, a briefing for leadership on the Unit Services Strategy is available from the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center.

ACS Program Flyers and Schedules Flyers are included as useful material that can be given to commanders to provide information on upcoming offerings. Commander's Guide A spiral-bound Commander's Guide on ACS which ACS has already been using is also included so that it can be distributed to command to provide them with an overview of each ACS program. A brochure for leadership on the unit services strategy has recently been developed and is available from the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center.

USC Forms A variety of forms that USCs (or ACS) have developed may be inserted in a Smartbook. These forms may include an introductory letter to commanders, needs survey, request form for classes, referral form, unit contact log, and evaluation form. These forms often serve as tools to assist the USC in serving the units. Actual recordkeeping on unit contacts, however, is often maintained separately.

Unit Information Some USCs have also placed point of contact information/directory and other pertinent information on their unit in their Smartbook.

ACS Staff Cohesion

7ith ACS staff serving as liaisons to the units and obtaining requests for assistance from the units, communication and collaboration among ACS staff are necessary to support USCs' efforts. While this includes sharing information to keep USCs informed of program offerings and staff's efforts. USCs often also need to discuss issues they encounter in dealing with their units. This includes having opportunities to exchange ideas. Installations have supported this need by addressing USS in staff meetings or having USCs meet on their own on a regular basis.

Development of Consultation Mindset Within ACS

The role of the USC is more than programs and services or "service broker". As the commander's resource, the USC is also expected to become a "consultant" in which the USC helps unit leaders determine and problem solve how to address unit needs. As a result, ACS can expect to provide unique services to each unit and further. in the future is likely to be encouraged to discover alternative approaches to delivering services to meet unit needs. A discussion among staff on the "consultant" aspect of the USC role may be beneficial for ACS. If necessary, this issue can be addressed in staff training.

Monitoring Progress on the USS

Because having information on the benefits of USS is essential for internal planning by ACS and for being able to tell the "USS story" to leadership, developing a mechanism for collecting data is needed. The Self-Assessment Guide for the ACS Unit Services Strategy provides a systematic approach for ACS to assess the ACS's progress and success with the strategy, and to assess the progress and success of the Unit Services Coordinator. This self-assessment guide is available as a downloadable file on the ACS website, ACSLink.



If-Assessment Gui

Overview. The self-assessment guide was developed based on qualitative and quantitative research on the Unit Services Strategy which identified a multitude of outcomes of effectiveness. These outcomes were subsequently reviewed by ACSs participating in an evaluation of the Unit Services Strategy who determined what were the most important indicators of effectiveness.

The guide identifies outcomes for three key areas: staff training, briefing leadership, and providing unit services. To complete the assessment form in the guide, an ACS is to rate itself on each outcome identified using a rating scale of not met, partially met, or fully met. For example, a key outcome of staff training is: USCs can provide basic information on each ACS program area. For this outcome, the form identifies two potential indicators for assessing whether this outcome has been achieved: 1) USCs demonstrate they have basic knowledge of ACS programs and 2) Unit leadership reports that USCs are knowledgeable about ACS programs. It has been left to the discretion of the ACS to determine what evidence is necessary to demonstrate that either one or both of these indicators is true.

Prior to using the Self-Assessment Guide, it is suggested that the ACS staff review and discuss the assessment form and, in particular, determine how assessments and ratings of each outcome (and indicator) will be made. To assist ACS in their efforts, it is advised that the Self-Assessment form be completed every year or other suitable time period depending upon the implementation and sustainment of the Unit Services Strategy at the installation.